Guide for developing interview questions

* Question format should consider any reasonable adjustments or modifications required by the candidate. For example, a person with visual impairment may require a larger size font.
* Questions should be simple. Ask one at a time.
* Open questions elicit the longest answers from the respondent. Do not ask closed questions that can be answered with one word.
* Ask the hard questions. If you don’t ask, they won’t tell.
* Outline the assessment criteria that you need to explore in the interview.
* Develop a set of questions that gather information about each of the assessment criteria, shaping them to fit particular kinds of candidates. The goal here is to tap into their experiences and expertise.
* Adjust the language of the interview according to the candidates (for example, an Aboriginal person, person with a disability).
* Take care to word questions so that candidates are motivated to answer as completely and honestly as possible.
* Ask ‘how’ and ‘what’ questions rather than ‘why’ questions to get stories of process rather than explanations of appropriate behaviour. For example, “What attracted you to this job?”
* Develop probing questions in advance that will elicit more detailed and elaborate responses to key questions. The more detail, the better your assessment of the criteria will be. These could be:
* Direct questions: “Do you find it easy to keep smiling when serving customers?”; “Are you happy with the way budget decisions are made?” Such questions are perhaps best posed towards the end of the interview, in order not to influence the direction of the interview.
* Indirect questions: “What are the qualities of a good team you have seen?” To explore the candidate’s views in more detail, a follow up question could be, “How do you personally contribute to your team’s effectiveness?”.
* Begin the interview with a ‘warm-up’ question that the respondent can answer easily and at some length (though not too long). It doesn’t have to pertain directly to what you are trying to find out, but this initial rapport-building will put you more at ease with one another and therefore will make the remainder of the interview flow more smoothly.
* Think about the logical flow of the interview. What questions should come first? What follows more or less naturally?
* More challenging questions can be asked towards the end of the interview when rapport has been established.
* The last question should provide some closure for the interview and leave the candidate feeling empowered, informed and that they have been given every opportunity to do well. For example, ‘Is there anything else you want to ask or add before we finish up?’
* During the interview, use a combination of the following types of questions to explore the candidate’s capabilities in more detail:
* Follow-up questions require the candidate to elaborate. For example, “Could you talk some more about that?”; “What do you mean by that?”
* Specifying questions: ‘What did you do then?’; ‘How did X react to what you said?’
* Probing questions: following up what has been said through direct questioning. For example, ‘You mentioned X, can you expand more on that?’